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Appellate court backs findings in the Rev. William Graham's countersuit

Written By: John Lundy | Aug 26th 2019 - 8pm.



Rev. William Graham wants to return to St. Michael's, following a jury award of \$13,500 in the case where he sued the man who accused him of child sexual abuse. Photo from William Graham Photo from William Graham

The Minnesota Court of Appeals has affirmed the finding of a Duluth jury that awarded \$13,500 to the Rev. William Graham, who sued a man who accused him of

interfered with his contractual duties, but it said accuser Terrence Jerome Davis Jr. did not intentionally inflict emotional distress, as Graham's countersuit claimed.

In December, Sixth Judicial District Judge Theresa Neo denied a motion from Bryant to reverse the verdict or order a new trial.

A three-member appellate panel affirmed Neo's rulings in a decision filed on Monday. Judge Denise D. Reilly, writing for the appellate court, noted that Davis' 2016 lawsuit against Graham remains unresolved.

When Davis' accusations were raised, the Diocese of Duluth conducted its own investigation, resulting in a finding that Graham had been "credibly accused." He continues to collect his salary and benefits but was removed from serving as priest at St. Michael's Church in Duluth's Lakeside neighborhood.



In a telephone interview on Monday, Graham said he expects a ruling within the next few months on his appeal to the Catholic Church's supreme court in Rome to be reinstated to his position at St. Michael's.

As he has before, Graham insisted that he is still the pastor of St. Michael's, "living in exile."

"I have every expectation that Rome will change things," he said.

Graham forwarded a copy of the appellate court ruling to the News Tribune just before 5 p.m. Monday, and Michael Bryant, the Waite Park, Minn., lawyer representing Davis, could not be reached for a comment after hours.

Bryant has said in the past that he and Davis stand by their accusation. Davis' suit was filed in May 2016, just days before the deadline to bring claims in the diocese's bankruptcy. It alleges that Graham abused Davis on at least three occasions in the 1970s, when Davis was about 15 years old.

Kyle Eller, spokesman for the Diocese of Duluth, also couldn't be reached. He has said in the past that the decision to remove Graham from public ministry "was complete."

Graham, 69, said he has every intention of returning to serve his parish.